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**Book Review: Michael Curtin and Hemant Shah (eds), *Reorienting Global Communication: Indian and Chinese Media without Borders*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2010**

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## Book Reviews

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Michael Curtin and Hemant Shah (eds), *Reorienting Global Communication: Indian and Chinese Media without Borders*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

This edited volume reflects the growing interest of Western media scholars in investigating the dramatic shifts in the orientation of Indian and Chinese media that have been brought about by globalization. Ranging from films to web-portals, Indian and Chinese media have attempted to connect with global diasporas and are therefore depicted against the dynamics of globalization. The book comprises two parts. Part I deals with the paradigm shift the (Western) authors perceive in Indian films, television and web-portals since the 1990s, when exporting transnational texts to global diasporas became a common feature of the industry. In turn, diasporas were thereby connected with native 'Indian-ness', as the authors aptly call it. Part II deals with more or less similar changes that occurred in the Chinese media scene, though China remains under a Communist regime which hardly allows the freedom that the Indian system offers.

Part I consists of seven chapters written by Western authors of Indian origin. Lakshmi Srinivas (Chapter 1), Aswin Punathambekar (Chapter 2), Shanti Kumar (Chapter 5) and Sreya Mitra (Chapter 7) focus on the film industry. Madhavi Mallapragada (Chapter 3) and Sujata Moorti (Chapter 4) investigate Indian-American websites and transnational weddings websites respectively. Divya C. McMillin (Chapter 6) considers Indian television.

Part II consists of two chapters on film (by Yuezhi Zhao, Chapter 8 and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, Chapter 9). Two chapters written by Joseph M. Chan (Chapter 10) and Zhongdong Pan (Chapter 12) revolve around television. Jack Linchuan Qiu (Chapter 14) considers Chinese techno-nationalism and global wifi policy, while Chua Ben Huat (Chapter 11) investigates pop music culture. Lastly, Chin-Chuan Lee (Chapter 13) investigates the discourse of *Global Times*, China's leading foreign policy newspaper, deliberating upon China's ambition to become a global superpower.

As far as Indian film-centric articles in Part I are concerned, the authors seem to have several points to put forward as to the nature, kind and scope of the globalization wave that swept into Indian cinema. First, they argue that the effect of globalization in the post-1990s became more visible and accentuated in Indian cinema through the increasing depiction of foreign locales and non-resident Indians (NRIs) as primary characters, around whom the main story revolves (Srinivas, pp. 26–32). Second, such a portrayal has led to a connection with the global diasporas that are eager to re-orient their families abroad towards native cultures, referred to as 'Indian-ness' (Punathambekar, pp. 47–50). Third, they point towards a number of significant developments, such as the voluminous

increase in film exports (p. 114) and the bulk expansion of the music industry and Bollywood, coupled with the increase in modern media gadgets (such as iPods) and increased opportunities to shoot films at low cost, especially at Ramoji Film City, Hyderabad (p. 108). Fourth, the authors have taken note of the unprecedented changes like the entry of supermarkets, big bazaars, Wal-marts, big shopping centres, multiplexes (p. 146), that have crept into the urban centres of large Indian cities (p. 28 and p. 146). Finally, the authors consider the increasing depiction of these commercial centres in Indian films as an important variable giving evidence of the impact of globalization on Indian cinema.

The investigations of web-portals and the internet more generally situate new media as tools which enable the diaspora to retrieve their identities through linking up with the native cultures and cultural iconography. This includes religious as well as social networking capital (p. 79). Through these web-portals, similar interests and discourses among the diasporas – spread far and wide – could be identified.

In the only article on the role of television in connecting the diasporas, Divya C. McMillin dwells on the ability of both foreign and Indian channels to relay the programmes that connect the diasporas (pp. 120–4). She argues that Zee TV and Sun Net Work TV in the private sector, and Doordarshan, the public sector broadcaster, transmit programmes competitively to transnational audiences based in South Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia and North America.

Chinese media, considered in Part II, have experienced an unusual shift due to globalization, though it is no way near the dimensions of the Indian development. First, globalization as conceived by the Communist regime in China has allowed both global capital and Hollywood studios to play a role in the production of transnational movies such as *Hero*.

The interpretation that the Chinese film industry is undergoing a sweeping change in terms of globalization emanates from the fact that the movie companies in China are trying to seek transnational partnerships and market access (p. 198). But apart from the Asia-Pacific region, little headway has been made with these. Chinese films are a scarce commodity in this part of the world and many of the Asiatic audiences have to be content with watching a Chinese movie once in a year or only every two years.

Similarly, the television industry in China broadcasts global formats and telecasts, but their resurgence on a global level – as compared to India – is a dream that is still far from realization. Another point in this context is that there is a stifling tension in Chinese television between the expansive aspirations of global China and pervasive anxieties about what is called ‘authentic’ Chinese identity (p. 203). Zhongdong Pan’s analysis of CCTV’s Spring Festivals Gala endeavours to show how cultural and familial identities have been well preserved, together with the national identity, in the era of globalization (p. 241). In his chapter on wifi policy, Jack Linchuan Qiu analyses China’s concern to establish itself as a global design centre and internet innovator (p. 287). But such an idea suffers from a lack of credibility given the realities of China’s regime.

The most important and notable change one can admittedly perceive is the dramatic shift undergone by Chinese music and pop culture. Apparently, exports of Chinese pop music to nearby Asian nations and to the West have increased (p. 235). But, this is only partly true. My observation indicates that Chinese pop culture could not penetrate where Bollywood music still reigns supreme within both Asia and the West.

Although the book presents twin laterals of media transitions in the two giant and highly populous nations of Asia, the argument that Bollywood film portrayals, aptly described as 'pluralistic films', in the era of globalization offer an alternative model to the Westernized approach to globalization (p. 35) is far from convincing. In fact, if one carefully looks at the arguments of Lakshmi Srinivas and Aswin Punathambekar, one would find a cluster of opposing hypotheses and variables in their treatment of the concept of globalization. Given the variables they take into consideration in suggesting that a massive transformation has taken place in Bollywood depictions or portrayals, it is indeed a bold step to make such a sweeping statement on the globalization model of Bollywood cinema. This needs to be subjected to a much deeper analysis.

Another criticism is that the anthology could have included a chapter of comparative discourse on the positioning of Chinese cinema vis-à-vis Indian cinema, Indian web-portals vis-à-vis Chinese web-portals, etc., in the emerging model of globalization. Lack of such a critical treatment of the subject and the treatment of globalization trends in respect of the two giant nations, make the collection seem a bit incoherent.

At the same time, I have no hesitation in saying that the authors in both parts of the book have made an excellent attempt at presenting a different model of globalization, which is apparently described by them as one emerging from a heterogeneous culture and plural diversity, as compared to the homogenized Western model of globalization. The book is therefore an invaluable source, and a thought-provoking read, for media scholars engaged in de-westernized approaches in media research.

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Miriam Ross, *South American Cinematic Culture: Policy, Production, Distribution and Exhibition*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010.

The focus of this book is on cinematic culture in four countries, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru. The work documents 'a regional cinema that is vibrant and diverse yet, at the same time, struggling to gain recognition and strength' (p. 1). Through her research Miriam Ross analyses the relationships between the filmmakers, policy makers, distributors, exhibitors and audiences. She asks a number of highly pertinent and topical questions in the introduction, and proceeds to provide answers to these in the chapters. These include: who has ownership of South American cinematic culture? (p. 2); how do the people involved in cinematic culture interact with processes of deterritorialization and transculturation that affect filmmakers and their work? (p. 2); what access do local audiences have to locally produced films?; how important is the problem of piracy, and does the widespread phenomenon of piracy make it commercially viable to make films in countries such as Bolivia? The author also asks 'whether it is possible for the country's various subjects to be encompassed by types of cultural policy' which focus as much on commercial imperatives as the promotion of cultural practices (pp. 9–10).

Ross divides her study into four main chapters with subsections. These are grouped under the following headings: State and institutional involvement; Commercial industry; International interests and, finally, Alternative practices. The structure of the book allows